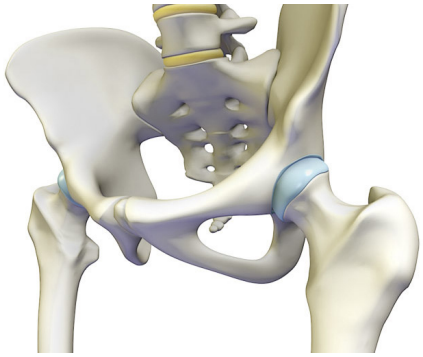

Question: How many times a week would you recommend doing flexibility exercises and why?

Dear to whom it may concern,

My name is Molly and I am a year 11 student at a College in South Australia. I am required to research a topic of my choice, which focuses on the flexibility of the hips and how this can improve jujitsu techniques.

I was wondering if you would have time to answer a question attached, regarding to flexibility of the hips. If you are not available, would you please be able to direct me to someone else from your company, who would be willing to assist me.

Question: How many times a week would you recommend doing flexibility exercises and why?

Thank you in advance for your help,

Hi Molly,

Yoga Philosophy teaches that the body and mind are connected - not two separate entities. They can be compared to the two sides of a coin and you can't have one without the other.

It is the mind that controls the level of flexibility within the body and the body is just a reflection of this internal mental state.

There is a part of your mind that is connected to your hips and in order to get your hips to release, you need to first release this area of your mind.

In Yoga we use Asana (Posture) to target specific areas of the body/mind complex. We use a specific posture (think of it like a tool) to highlight the area of restriction. Once we have targeted the area we then insert our attention into this part just like you would insert a key into a lock.

If you keep a key and a lock separate there is zero chance of opening the lock. Now only do you have to insert the key, but you also have to turn the key in the right direction.

In Asana practice we insert the key (mind) into the lock (body) on an inhalation and then turn the key on the exhalation. The body naturally softens on the out breath.

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As you can imagine this way of yoga practice requires your full intention as well as your full attention. You must internalize your awareness and awareness is the essence of Yoga.

The majority of yoga teachers do not know of or understand what I have just explained to you. You can tell this by the fact they play music during class, sometimes quite loudly.

It is not possible to internalize your mind when your attention is being externalized, that is listening to the music.

Smells have the same effect of externalizing the mind, so if the yoga teacher is burning incense, this too is working against you as the act of smelling will shift your awareness outwards.

From the above explanation, you can see that it is not the number of times you practice, but how you practice that is the important issue. You could practice 24/7 365, but if you are not practicing correctly, then you are really wasting your time.

However, as a general guideline we recommend beginners practice 3 times per week as the affect of a correct practice last for 4 days. If you only practice once per week, you are basically always starting from scratch.

Once a person progresses from a beginner to an experienced student of yoga we recommend 6 days per week as this is where you will make the most progress.

The goal of Yoga is not flexibility but freeing the mind from limitations. The increased flexibility, strength and balance are just a wonderful side-effect.

Molly you may need to put this advice into practice for 2 to 3 months to better understand it. Yoga is an experiential art which needs to be implemented and felt in order to comprehend it.

Yoga is simple, but not easy because we are working with an imperfect body and an undisciplined mind.

I have attached a Brain Wave Chart. In it you will see Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta waves explained. In Asana practice, we aim to slow down the brain waves to at least Alpha, but with committed practice you can go much further.

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Four Categories of Brain Wave Patterns	
Beta (13 – 100 Hz)	Concentration, arousal, alertness, cognition Higher levels associated with anxiety, dis-ease, feelings of separation, fight or flight
Alpha (8 – 12.9 Hz)	Relaxation, super-learning, relaxed focus, light trance Increased serotonin production Pre-sleep or pre-waking drowsiness Mediation, beginning of access to unconscious mind
Theta (4 – 7.9 Hz)	Dreaming sleep (REM sleep) Increased production of catecholamines (vital for learning and memory), increased creativity Integrative, emotional experiences, potential change in behaviour, increased retention of learned material Hypnagogic imagery, trance, deep mediation, access to unconscious mind
Delta (.1 – 3.9 Hz)	Dreamless sleep Human growth hormone released Deep, trance-like, non-physical state, loss of body awareness Access to unconscious and "collective unconscious" mind

Brain Wave Patterns and Their Meaning

Beta pattern. This is the fastest pattern: 13-100+ Hertz (Hz, cycles/sec). This is the common pattern of normal waking consciousness and is associated with alertness, arousal, and concentration. Except for unusual circumstances, we create some combination of all four categories of brain waves at all times. For most people, most of the time, however, beta waves are of greater amplitude, or strength, than the others, and are therefore the most prominent. We now also understand that higher-end beta waves (30 Hz and higher) occur during times of uneasiness, distress, and anxiety. Dysfunctional and addictive behaviours, neurosis, and strong feelings of separation are common experiences when the brain operates in the extreme high end of the beta range. The extremes of the beta range are also associated with what scientists call the "fight or flight response."

Alpha pattern. This pattern is somewhat slower: 8-12.9 Hz, and occurs soon after closing your eyes and relaxing. Alpha brain waves are associated with introspection. In the alpha state, the body produces calming neuro-chemicals. At the higher end of its range it produces what has been termed a "super learning" state. When you are deeply absorbed in a book, for instance, you are probably making an increased amount of alpha waves. Pre-sleep or pre-waking drowsiness occurs at the lower end of the alpha range. Deep alpha (i.e., the lower end of the alpha range) is also associated with peace and contentment, and is the predominant brain wave pattern of traditional meditation. While beta is part of "fight or flight", alpha (and slower) waves create what Dr. Herbert Benson of the Harvard Medical School termed the "relaxation response." In this state, instead of being mobilized to deal with external danger, we are turned inward for introspection, learning, relaxation and renewal.

Theta pattern. This pattern is slower still, between 4-7.9 Hz. This is the pattern of rapid eye movement (REM) dreaming sleep, sometimes called a hypnagogic state. Theta is associated with enhanced creativity, memory, healing, and integrative experiences, where we put together previously disparate pieces of information, leading to an "ah-ha" experience or sudden understanding. Generally, even very advanced meditators attain the theta state for only moments at a time. Studies of Zen monks have shown momentary bursts of heightened theta during meditation. Many psychologists believe that theta state is the doorway to the unconscious mind.

Delta pattern. This is the slowest pattern, between 0.1-3.9 Hz. It is the pattern of dreamless sleep. Some have postulated that in delta we make contact with what Swiss psychiatrist Carl G. Jung called the "collective unconscious: shared by all humans. A great feeling of unity and oneness is experienced in delta. At the same time, it is possible to be alert in this state, as long as there is a small amount of beta, alpha, or theta patterns.